

# Broad Meadows Middle School

**Quincy, Massachusetts.** "I kept looking at the scar left from a beating by an overseer," Amanda Loos said. She described Iqbal Masih, the 12-year-old Pakistani boy who was speaking about children's rights to the seventh grade class at Broad Meadows Middle School in Quincy, Massachusetts. Iqbal's growth had been stunted by malnutrition. "When he sat in the chair, his feet didn't even touch the floor," Amanda added.

Iqbal's father had sold the boy into bonded labor with a carpet manufacturer when he was four years old for the equivalent of \$12.00 to pay for his brother's wedding. Iqbal was to repay the debt by working for pennies a day. Sometimes chained to the carpet loom, sometimes beaten and abused, Iqbal had worked for 12 to 14 hours a day, six days a week, for six years. At 10, he fled the factory and joined the Bonded Labor Liberation Front to fight against forced child labor and educate child workers about their rights.

Iqbal was visiting the United States to receive the Reebok Human Rights Youth-In-Action Award when he spoke to Amanda's class. He told his story to the wide-eyed seventh graders at Broad Meadows, who had grown up in relative luxury with electricity, waterbeds, and Nintendos. He told them

Broad Meadows Middle School students



A school for Iqbal in Pakistan. Over 275 kids attend.

he began giving speeches against child labor and working to free other children because 7.5 million kids under 10 were enslaved in his country (and tens of millions of children around the world). Iqbal held up a carpet tool and a pencil and told them that kids should learn to use pencils instead of carpet tools. All he wanted was to be able go to school.

Enraged, Jim Cuddy said, "I thought that slavery died in Lincoln's time. I had no idea it was still going on in so many countries." He raced home that night and called 60 carpet stores to find out if they were aware that their carpets might have been woven by children in forced labor. All but one told him to mind his own business.

Amanda and her friends Jennifer Brundige and Elaine Legaspi clicked into the Scholastic Network on the school computer, composed a letter, and emailed it to 36 middle schools across the nation. Their letter told Iqbal's story and asked other kids to work against child slavery.

Iqbal returned to Pakistan, where he received death threats. Four months later, in the spring of 1995, Iqbal was shot to death while riding a bike in front of his grandmother's house.

Broad Meadows kids heard the news and mourned. "I was shocked and devastated, but determined not to be paralyzed by violence," Amanda remembers.

"Iqbal really wanted a school for kids in the Punjab province," one student said. "Let's build his school," they all decided.

The students sent out email messages again, this time asking for donations for "A School for

Iqbal." They asked for donations of \$12.00 because Iqbal was sold for \$12.00 and was murdered at age 12. Volunteers from Amnesty International created a Web site for them.

They received over 3,000 snail mail replies (letters), which they answered by hand, and at least 6,000 email messages. Within a year, they raised more than \$147,000 and had teamed up with Sudhaar, a Pakistani group that took over the project of building the school. By November 1996, the school opened and was serving 278 students ages four to 12. All of the children work, but their employers now have to allow different shifts so that they can attend school.

Broad Meadow students set aside a portion of the money they collected as a fund for 50 families to use to buy their children out of labor contracts. Still not satisfied with all they had done, the students offered mini-loans to mothers to start their own businesses so they wouldn't have to sell their children.

According to Broad Meadows teacher Ron Adams, "The kids here have never met the children in Pakistan. This whole project has been done by email letters." Broad Meadows kids are still receiving donations, and they are receiving recognition for their efforts, including the Reebok Human Rights Youth-in-Action Award.

Student Michael Gibbons sums it up: "Iqbal has become a symbol of the lost children in poor countries everywhere. Maybe we should build another school."



Read more about this story at the Broad  
Meadows Web site:

*[www.mirrorimage.com/iqbal](http://www.mirrorimage.com/iqbal)*

**Friendship Through Education** is an  
Internet project that lets teachers and stu-  
dents communicate and work with other  
classrooms around the world.

*[www.friendshipthrougheducation.org](http://www.friendshipthrougheducation.org)*

# Franklin Elementary School

**Franklin, Nebraska.** The kids on Franklin Elementary School's Community Problem-Solving Team were concerned. Ever since the construction of two new school buildings had taken away part of the playground, quarrels and fights at recess had become common. Calling themselves the Conflict Busters, the kids observed what was happening at recess. They noted many students shoving, pushing, grabbing balls, arguing over rules.

"It's sometimes really hard to let things go in class because you're still thinking about the argument," said Jessica Ziegler, one of the ten 11- and 12-year-olds working on the project.

Zack Zade rubbed his blond crewcut. "And kids have a lot less to do when they go outside."

"I really miss the basketball court," added Mitch Bydalek, an avid sports enthusiast.

Their teachers, Marilyn Hayes and Patricia Naden, agreed. Ms. Hayes added, "Approximately 200 kids have to share this same space and equipment."

The Conflict Busters needed information to help them solve the problem. They decided that if kids had consistent rules for the most popular games, the worst conflicts could be prevented. So they prepared questions and interviewed teachers to get information. They used what they learned to write a rule book for the school. Now everyone would follow the same rules. They also wrote a conflict resolution book with worksheets for every grade.

Franklin Elementary Community Problem-Solving Team teaching from their conflict resolution workbook.

Next they interviewed an artist-in-residence who helped them plan playground improvements. Then they interviewed the superintendent to find out what equipment was allowed on the playground. They were disappointed to discover that the school had no money for new playground equipment.

Did the kids give up at that point? Certainly not! They took their project to the city council, who listened to their problem and then designated some lottery money for a new basketball court. The kids cheered, especially Mitch.

"I was surprised that the adults would listen that much to us," said Karsen Zade.

And the kids surprised the adults with their politeness—not only during the interviews, but also with their thank-you notes and appreciation later.

## Check It Out

Franklin Elementary School's Community Problem-Solving Team is affiliated with an international organization, the Future Problem Solving Program (FPSP). Find out more about this dynamic group:

**Future Problem Solving Program**  
2028 Regency Road  
Lexington, KY 40503  
1-800-256-1499  
[www.fpsp.org](http://www.fpsp.org)



Amber Coffman presents gifts to the homeless.

Amber with some of the homeless she has helped.

## Amber Lynn Coffman

*Glen Burnie, Maryland.* Amber Lynn Coffman likes to talk. She's one of those kids who feels as comfortable with a microphone in her hand as she does with an ice cream cone. Amber got hooked on speaking and service at age nine when she did a book report on Mother Teresa. She loved speaking about her hero, and was further inspired after volunteering in a local homeless shelter.

Amber started Happy Helpers for the Homeless when she was 10. Using her persuasive speaking ability, she has presented at many organizations, clubs, and businesses to convince people to donate to her cause. At Christmas, she hosts a huge gift drive. In the spring, Amber and her volunteers hand-stuff 300 Easter baskets for children and adults. She includes toiletries such as

combs, brushes, and soaps. The Salvation Army allows her to use their building as a center for many activities, including coat drives and arranging for haircuts, dental treatment, and job help.

Every week Amber and her volunteers—usually about 14 kids a week, ages four through 18—prepare 600 bag lunches in her apartment. Her patient mother watches as the kids form an assembly line across the carpet. Now Happy Helpers has incorporated and thrives in 30 or more states, providing services for the homeless.

Amber's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Written up in numerous magazines and appearing on Nickelodeon and "The Today Show," this dynamic young woman has been recognized by The Giraffe Project as a young hero willing to stick her neck out. In 1995, Amber received the Young Adult National Caring Award. In 1996, she was selected to carry the Olympic Torch to symbolize "Hope for the Homeless." In 1997, she received the Prudential Spirit of Community Award and was honored at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. Crayola has named her an "Ultimate True Blue Hero," donating \$10,000 to Happy Helpers for the Homeless and putting her name on a new crayon.

Comfortable whether she's speaking to a handful of people or to a crowd, Amber spoke to 1,000 young people on National Youth Service Day about being involved in community service. Amber says, "It's indescribable when you speak in front of a group. You introduce new ideas to people, make them aware of the issues out there, and get them involved. I get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside."

What does Amber want to be when she grows up? A broadcast journalist, of course.

### .....> **Check It Out** <.....

For more information on young people who've started ventures to help the homeless check out Youth Venture's homelessness Web page:

*[www.youthventure.org/homelessnesshunger.html](http://www.youthventure.org/homelessnesshunger.html)*



# Whittier Elementary School

Whittier Elementary First Grade

**Salt Lake City, Utah.** Did you ever wonder what happens to those plastic toys that fast-food restaurants sell to kids along with the burgers and tacos? Where do all the race cars, dinosaurs, alien life forms, and television characters go after the kids exit with their loot?

Kids in Whittier Elementary's first and second grades for gifted students wondered the same thing. How much money did restaurants spend to make toys that the kids didn't really want? They said to their teacher, Karen Nicksich, "Maybe that money is just a waste."

So the kids designed a survey for 600 children, ages five to 12, to find out what kids did with their toys. The results were no big surprise to them. Only 1 percent kept their toys from the fast-food chains. Most of the toys ended up squashed on backseats of cars, later to be chucked into the garbage with a residue of sugar toasties and broken crackers.

Kids didn't really want the toys, and the surveys showed they'd forgo the toy if the money the

restaurants spent on them would be donated to a good cause.

The kids made bar graphs and pie charts to display their findings. And then they wrote letters to the managers of local fast-food chains, inviting them to their school to discuss the results of their survey.

"We think you should let kids choose how they want the money used," they told the managers of Taco Time. The restaurant listened when the kids suggested, "We could call the program 'Make the Choice at Taco Time,' and kids could mark a ticket or placemat to show how they wanted the money used."

The kids met to brainstorm an enormous list of causes the money could benefit. They finally carved it down to four choices for kids to donate the toy money to: families, animals, sick children, and the arts. Then they created placemats that Taco Time could use to advertise the program.

They proved that even first graders aren't too young to try to help others.

## ➤ Earth Angels

**St. Louis, Missouri.** The Earth Angels are truly "earth shakers." The environmental protection club in St. Louis has accomplished amazing things. The kids work on many projects to help endangered species, protect the rainforests, and prevent global warming. The Earth Angels have won over 100 awards and citations for their activities, including a Missouri State Senate commendation, a U.S. Congressional tribute, a letter of commendation from First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and a citation from President Bill Clinton commending them on their environmental achievements.

One of the Earth Angels's specialties is to wield powerful petitions. They know that individual kids don't have much of a voice, but by representing many voices on a petition they really pack a wallop.

The 7- to 12-year-old kids meet in neighborhood clubs with the director and founder of Earth Angels, Neil Andre—a man who knows how to ask good questions and who allows these inner-city kids to find their own answers.

When the Earth Angels learned about an annual winter slaughter of the bison near Yellowstone Park, the kids created a petition asking that the killing be stopped, or at least handled in a more humane way. The kids researched another cause and petitioned to free a dolphin from a poor facility. Neither of their petitions achieved their goals, but the kids were proud that they had tried to make a difference. They took a risk and stood up for what they felt was right.

⋮  
Earth Angels gather signatures on one of their many petitions.

You might think this doesn't sound like much power. But the kids learned a lot about problem solving. They created another petition to save their city's beloved Forest Park from additional development. "This is the only real park we have," Jason Harrison complained. When the development measure came up for a vote in a local election, the Earth Angels passed out 3,000 flyers asking citizens to vote against it. This time they succeeded. The plan to develop the park was smashed by 90 percent of the voters in the areas where the kids passed out their petitions and flyers.

Neil Andre said to his kids, who banged triumphantly on his door on the way to school, "Now you know David can beat Goliath sometimes."

### ..... ➤ Check It Out ◀ ..... .....

Are you interested in finding out more about the Earth Angels? Check out their Web site:

**Earth Angels**

*[www.members.aol.com/halo4earth](http://www.members.aol.com/halo4earth)*

**They also have a "sister site" on America Online:**

*[users.aol.com/Tambo/index.html](http://users.aol.com/Tambo/index.html)*



# KidsFACE

**Nashville, Tennessee.** On a sunny afternoon after school, 20 kids in grades five through eight met with their advisor, Michelle Scott. These members of KidsFACE (Kids For A Clean Environment) at St. Henry's Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee, were trying to create PSAs to urge people to take care of the environment. But so far, their PSAs weren't very good. Their music lacked punch.

Then Ashley Crow had a brainstorm. "Since we're in Nashville," she said, "let's contact the Country Music Foundation to see if they will help us get a couple of songwriters. The stuff we're writing isn't that great. They could really help us."

To the kids' excitement, the Country Music Foundation didn't have trouble finding songwriters willing to help out. The Foundation hooked KidsFACE up with musicians Mary Bomar and Bob Ritter, who helped them put their words to music. Here are the lyrics from two of the PSAs they created:

Jill Bader:

*We have to be able to join  
hands to save the earth.*

Members of KidsFACE record their PSAs urging people to protect the environment.

Meryl Large:

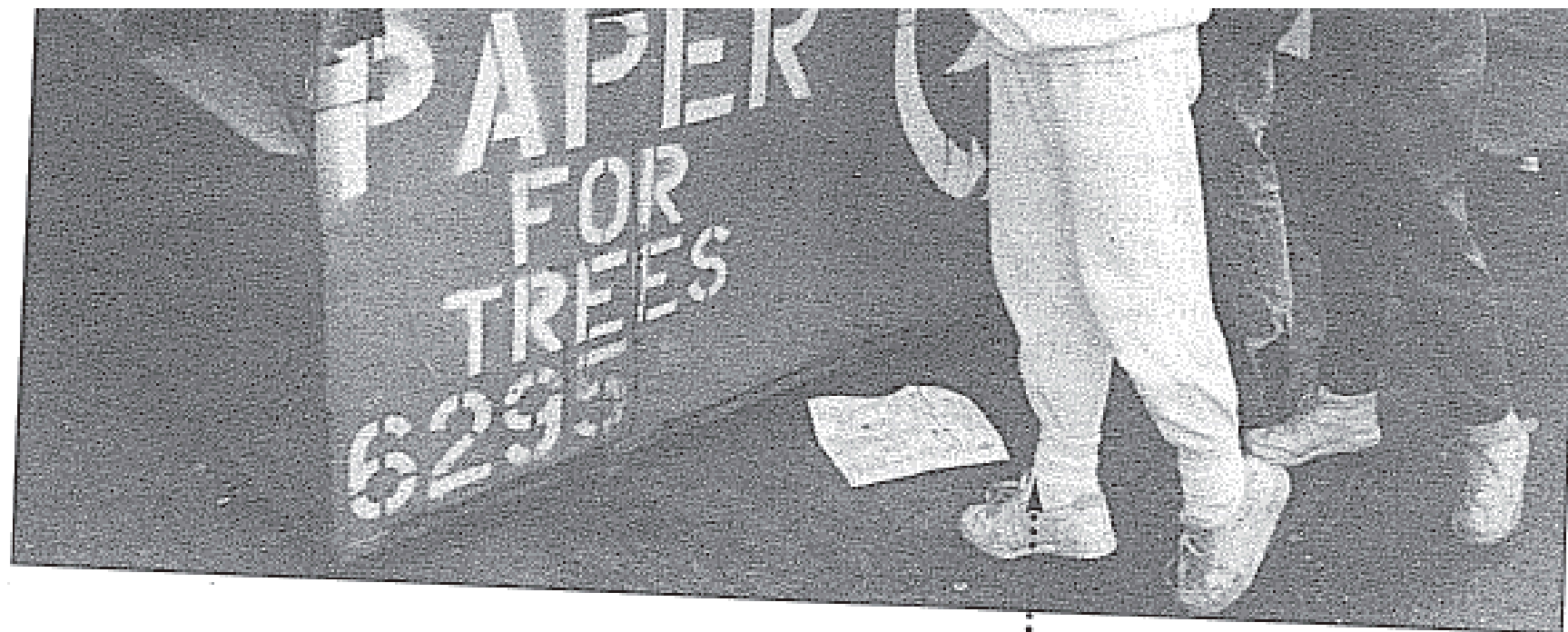
*Think about what is important to you:  
The land, the water, and the animals, too.  
Treat them kindly, with respect.  
The hope to save them is not lost yet.  
Maybe you will understand,  
The earth is in your hands.*

They recorded their PSAs in Studio B at RCA Studios in Nashville, in the same studio that Elvis Presley had crooned from in his early years. The kids sang and swayed with the music that Mary and Bob added to their words.

Then they mailed out 200 copies of their PSAs to radio stations all over the country to be played during Earth Week 1996. Wal-Mart also played them in all of their stores.

But what made them most proud was performing the songs for their school. A fourth-grade girl, Michelle Ising, said enthusiastically, "I can't believe someone in my school made something that was on the radio. When can I make one?"

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Courtesy Jeff Allred and Will Fehr, Salt Lake Tribune

Hawthorne Elementary kids open a recycling center in Salt Lake City.

## Hawthorne Elementary

**Salt Lake City, Utah.** "Wait! Don't toss out that newspaper! Save that aluminum can!" The fourth, fifth, and sixth graders at Hawthorne Elementary in Salt Lake City, Utah, are serious about recycling. If one of these energetic kids can corner you, he or she will wring a promise out of you to save all your toilet paper tubes and old clothes hangers in order to make a super marble shoot for their "Recycled Invention Fair." Or Eric, Ernie, or McKay will sidle up to sell you their triangular shaped earrings made out of old cans. Only \$2.00 a pair. What a bargain!

But their teacher, Sheri Sohm, encouraged them to think bigger. So the kids carried their recy-

cling idea to the community, collecting 15,000 cans at their school and starting the Sugar House Recycling Center for Newspapers. And some of the children have even served on the mayor's recycling committee.

They call themselves KOPE—Kids Organized to Protect the Environment. They have planted a garden in their school yard, written and presented plays, organized their own Earth Day art fair, and written a newsletter. They have started KOPE groups in other schools and hosted two meetings with 15 other schools to encourage projects to celebrate Earth Week.